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# EPIC SEMANTICS OF THE BUD TRIAL IN TURKISH LOVE EPIC STORIES

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## **Abstract**

In Turkic folk belief Bergu means acquiring extraordinary abilities, gaining the characteristics of divine gift, sometimes seeing sacred dreams during which the lively part of the spirit separates from the body and travels to abstract worlds. Acquiring the Bud radically changes the hero's inner life and his whole existence transforming him into a totally new person. New obstacles and struggles begin when the hero reaches the place where his Bud lives. Abbas is put into a poison well, Gurbani's fate is put in a game of gamble, Tahir is put into a chest and thrown into a river and so on. In order to demonstrate the hero's determination and strength the narrator puts the hero through all imaginable difficulties and makes him come out of those difficulties with a victory. Finally, they decide to check whether he's the real truthful lover and thus image-win contest of the plot of love story begins and no matter what happens he reaches his Bud. This article systematizes the kinds of trials the hero faces to acquire his Bud.

*Keywords:* epos, hero, love, trial, struggle

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## **1. Introduction**

Strengthening of lyrical trend the epic tradition resulted in the formation of legends associated with the motive of pure love. By bringing together real and symbolic philosophical and educational meanings of love, minstrel literature of the Middle Ages revealed love legends that had specific art qualities. Love legends are original epic folklore having specific plot and composition.

The content, in other words, the plot of love legends is mainly composed of the Hero going after The Bud and the description of adventures that he comes across and the struggle that he wages for his love. For example, the chapters of 'The Book of Dede Korkut', the pure heroic stories like 'Koroglu', and love legends like 'Asli and Karam', 'Abbas and Gulgaz' contain the trial of love and the struggle. However, the variations differ.

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## **2. Epic hero in Turkish epic**

First, let's find the answer to the question of who the hero of the epic saga of love is. The protagonist's premature birth is inspired by divine creatures, glorified by the deities of holiness, miraculous birth, special birth after birth, distinct from their peers, and still in the later stages of the saga. It is a character that follows adventure by adventure along the saga, is subjected to a thousand pains for its love and Bud, and is repeatedly subjected to severe trials. This is the very hero who goes through numerous epic adventures and who repeatedly bears severe trials for his love, which is his Bud.

Generally, as the well-known folklorist B. Prop [1] puts it, the epos is composed of struggle. That is to say, the main characteristic of an epos expresses itself in the way its plot is devoted to the struggle. Every epos deals with a fight, struggle and trials dedicated to a purpose. However, as this struggle have different meanings and content at different times and each are for a different purpose, it expresses itself in different ways in the works that correspond to the main character of each time. The plot of Love Stories, to be precise, the struggle of the hero to reach his Bud, has been divided into 4 categories by M.H. Tahmasib by characterizing it in the following way:

1. The birth of the Hero and his early training and education,
2. Lovers taking the Bud,
3. Obstacles,
4. Competition and victory [2].

Different researchers have addressed Turkish Epos and have categorized them in different ways. In 'The Typology of Turkish and Bashkir Epic Saga' written by Ulku Kara Duzgun, the scholar has presented 24 characteristic features of Turkish epos hero. The 2<sup>nd</sup> characteristic feature is the Hero's miraculous birth, and the 15<sup>th</sup> feature is usually the Hero's compulsion to pass through different struggles, the 20<sup>th</sup> feature is the help to the Hero by extraordinary people, and the 21<sup>st</sup> feature is the Hero's meeting the girl he will marry [3]. This has occurred as a result of examination of various epos. In fact, in this categorization that combines the characteristics of more epics, it is possible to see the various characteristic features typical for Love Stories.

## **3. The beginning of the story of 'Buta' in Turkish epics and the connection between Buta and Shamanism**

For example, in 'Mahmoud and Agjaqush', 'Shehri and Mehri', 'Slave Mahmoud' and dozens of stories like this, the Hero is the son who is born after a lot of alms. The Bud story characteristic for Love Stories begins with the emergence of the Hero Girl. It is known that the person who is given the Bud becomes a True Lover.

They see the dream in which a poet saz player drinks three bowls of drink. He drinks the first bowl in a single sip and says 'for the sake of the Creator'. Drinking the second bowl in two sips he says 'for the sake of the thirsty'. He

drinks the third bowl in three sips and says ‘for the sake of Lover’. Then he is told his Lover’s name. When he wakes up, foam comes out of his mouth and nose (according to some sources, it is blood, not foam). Then he takes his saz and starts to play and sing. He has acquired this ability while he was asleep.

“He dreamt that a Fakir is standing above his head:

- I’m here to realize your desire. Take this bowl and drink what’s in it...

As soon as Mahmoud drank the bowl:

- Noble Fakir, I’m burning with thirst, please satisfy my thirst, oh Noble Fakir!

Fakir said:

- This is the kind of thirst that is impossible to satisfy. This is the love thirst.” [4]

The Fakir bestows both beauty and love on people by giving them the Bud. Even in many plots clumsy, not so attractive heroes become beautiful, tall, handsome lovers and poets with charming voice. As it is obvious, the bowl from which lovers drink has mythical feature. Flooding foam from the mouth of those who are given the Bud after they wake up is also associated with mythical views. Here that would be worth remembering the traditional story (related to a myth) dealing with the shaman and the views they preached. In many versions of the traditional story called ‘Shaman’s Illness’ it is narrated that the Shaman experiences an unpleasant feeling and he goes to the river bank and lies on his face with foam flooding from his mouth. He remains in this position for some time. When he regains consciousness he becomes a shaman – he writes poetry, plays the saz. We frequently come across this episode in epic stories as well: “Three days have passed. Mahmoud sneezes and regains consciousness, and he sits up. He is asked:

- Prince, what’s your trouble? Tell us, and we will find a solution.

Mahmoud says:

- If I tell you, my tongue will get burnt. Bring me a saz, I will say with saz.” [4, p. 36]

Let us draw attention to an issue here. The future shaman lying on his face and sleeping on a river bank is not just a coincidence. Shaman getting ill by water is associated to an ancient mythical way of thinking which relates to the belief in water among ancient Turkic peoples. So that the Turkic peoples considered water to be one of the elements of the Origin. That’s why the shaman falls ill by the Origin, and in this way he asks water for help.

Let us have a look at another position in traditional stories. The shaman falls on the ground, and remains in this position for some time. And this is related to the sanctity of the Earth. The Earth is described as The Mother (female) among Turkic peoples. The future shaman worships water, soil - the Earth which he considers a great sacred mother, and through their support he acquires the shaman’s talent. Thus, the future saz master shaman who protects people from illnesses and evils has been created by the belief in water and soil [5].

In Turkmen version Koroglu is born in a grave (in the ground). Probably it is hinted that the Turkmen Koroglu’s mother (his dead mother giving him birth is a later addition) is the Earth Goddess.

Let's take another example. A number of Ruby Olonxo (folk tales) fighters are in most cases, weak and ugly. Such children are buried in soil after which they feed from the soil, and become strong and handsome. In Azerbaijani fairy tale 'Simnar' the child is also ugly when he is born: "... his head, eyebrow and eyelids had no hair at all, and the child was weak like a piece of meat" [6]. Water enlivens and gives hair to this ugly, weak child. In Azerbaijani 'Koroglu' the water of Qosha bulag (Twin spring) gives Korogly a loud voice and strength, and makes him a poet and singer. Water is an actively involved in 'Korogly', and passively involved in 'Shaman's Illness' [7].

As it is obvious from the cited examples, the attitude of Turkic peoples including of Azerbaijani people to soil has made the Earth-soil sacred. In the Holy Quran in surah 86- Al-Tariq (the Night Comer), verse 6 it is said: "He is created of water pouring forth". In surah 35 'Fatir' ('Creator') in verse 11 it is said: "He is Allah who created you (your father Adam) from soil, then from a drop, then He made you mates". Hence, these initial objects of worship are associated to the creation of man in Holy books as well [8].

The Bud topic appears in a variety of ways in epic stories:

1. In stories like 'Mehr-Mah', 'Mohammed and Gulandam' and 'Seyfalmulk' the Hero falls in love with the girl he sees the picture of.
2. In the stories 'Shah Ismail', 'Karim-Susan', 'Asli-Karam' the epic hero falls in love with a girl after seeing her in person.
3. The hero goes after the girl as he hears of her.
4. The hero receives a letter or a message from the girl and goes after her.

The most common version is the one in which both the hero and the girl are given the Bud by somebody in their dreams simultaneously [9].

#### **4. Etymology of the word Buta**

In general, according to the mythical idea 'giving the Bud' and 'getting the Bud' is associated with the name of the goddess of beauty Bata. According to the oriental mythology it is the goddess of beauty Bata who distributes love and beauty to people upon their birth. In order to protect people from the evil, this mythical goddess sometimes cuts down on the shares of many people, and sometimes delays their share. In no scenario the hero who has been given the Bud is defeated. Because the goddess of beauty 'protects' her lovers under various disguises, and lends them a helping hand when needed. This tradition typical for Azerbaijani epic story-making is inherent in stories 'Mahmud and Agjaqush', 'Emrah from Azatin', 'Love and Selbi'. After long struggles Mahmoud reaches his Bud and they become happy [10].

In general, in Turkish literature the Bud is regarded as giving love, which is more commonly known as Bergu. In Turkic folk belief Bergu means acquiring extraordinary abilities, gaining the characteristics of divine gift, sometimes seeing sacred dreams during which the lively part of the spirit separates from the body and travels to abstract worlds. This has a meaning of revelation or inspiration which stands in the root concept of the expression 'Divine Gift'. Mongolian word

‘berh’ which means ‘difficulty’ and Turkish word ‘berk’ which means ‘hard’ are of the same root which explains the difficulty and discipline of revelation and inspiration. Although revelation is accepted as belonging only to prophets, it is also understood as a divine message in Islamic terminology. For example, in surah Bee (Nahl) in the Holy Quran Allah is told to have made a revelation to a bee.

The term ‘Bud’ is also used in the sense of the sacred dream, but the origin of the word is likely to stem from the Sanskrit. The word Bud (Buta) was later substituted with the word Wine Glass (Bade). Divine inspiration or revelation is an acting agent in many religions under different names [D. Karakurd, *Turkish legend dictionary*, E-Book, Turkish, 2011, 53-54].

M. Tahmasib, M. Seyidov and many researchers evaluated the word Buta (Bud) as having multiple meanings like: camel, buds, flowers, branches, sign, target and other meanings [2, 5]. The word Buta is encountered with the meanings ‘target’, ‘aim’, ‘sign’ in ‘The Book of Dede Korkut’. In the chapter ‘Looting of Qazan Khan’s house’ it says: “When my son Uruz threw an arrow, he got the Bud”. Or in the chapter ‘Bamsı Beyrek’: “Obviously my sultan Dali Qanjaq too...used to get the Bud and sit with his friends”. In folk epos too the concept Bud is close to the meaning ‘target’. Simply, in epic stories the Bud is somewhat in figurative meaning and its poetic-symbolic level has been strengthened [9, p. 5].

Heros meeting each other and falling in love in their dream is one of the very ancient literary motives. This motive is encountered in fairy-tales and legends of the fourth century BC. An example of this would be the adventure of Odatude and Zarir. The ruler of the country located between Caspian Doors and Syr-Darya river Zarir sees the daughter of the ruler of the cross-Syr-Darya ruler in his dream and falls in love. Odatude also sees the famous hero Zarir in her dream that night and falls in love [11].

Many researchers relate the Bud with hijab that came with Islam, and perhaps the developers of saga have used the method of heroes having dreams as a motive for them to give each other the Bud. In relatively ancient sagas also this work is carried out through the medium of unknown old respected fakirs, and later through Khizir who is a helper of those who are in need and at the same time is the symbol of family, love and youth. But as Islam, particularly Shiite cult spread, cult of Ali strengthened, and squeezed out Khizir.

Getting the Bud radically changes the inner world and the existence of the hero, and transforms him into a totally new person. Even in some of our sagas, the hero’s personality before getting the Bud completely contradicts his personality after getting the Bud. For example, before getting the Bud Gurbani is completely useless at doing any work properly. Gurbani is such a prodigal, useless child that he causes one of the cattle he has borrowed from his uncle to be eaten by a wolf, and the other two cattle to be sunk in the mud. Or, according to ‘Abbas and Gulgaz’ epic, although his mother sends Abbas to school every day, he cannot learn to read or to write. In difficult times for them, Gurbani sleeps in a cave, and Abbas sleeps in the garden. At that moment the respected Fakir, or Khizir, or Ali

enter the dream of the young man, makes him drink what is inside the bowl in their hands, or shows him the Bud between two fingers and makes him drink a bowl of drink that consists of light.

## **5. The emergence of heroine and giving Buta to heroes**

The stories do not usually describe what happens to the girl who receives and drinks the Bud. But the boy usually falls ill. As a result of this illness he sometimes cannot recover for several days and sleeps unconsciously. Finally, he wakes up and asks for a saz. The absent minded child who is useless at doing anything properly suddenly becomes a poet, a singer and a good saz-player. He advances to the degree of a wise sage of his time. He starts struggling for the truth and justice, and even becomes aware of hidden secrets.

After meeting his Bud in his dream, the hero just says ‘Let’s say goodbye, I have to go’ without knowing where his Bud is, and sets off a journey sometimes with his servant or a friend, or sometimes on his own from where his next trial starts. There exist many forms of road obstacles and road trials, the most typical and grounded ones of which have been grouped by M.H. Tahmasib [2, p. 76].

In some of our stories the heroes meet different people, like Gurbani meets with a merchant, Valeh meets with Nobleman Masum, Tahir meets with merchant Khanverdi and other people, and these erudite, kind, noble and benevolent people share the sorrows of the hero, and after determining that the hero is an intelligent and clever person, they try to talk them into returning from their way, trying to adopt them or even telling them they are ready to marry their daughter or sister with him. The heroes of a number of our stories meet robbers, the forty thieves or a single-eyed monster on their way, and get into the struggle of life and death with them, whereas some of the heroes make friends with beautiful, intelligent girls with extraordinary abilities who fall in love with the hero. But neither the happy life promised by the kind people or the girls who share their secret nor the tortures or troubles make them forget their Bud, and they go after her at the first opportunity.

## **6. The struggle for the hero’s love (Bud) in the Turkish epics**

New obstacles and struggles begin when the hero reaches the place where his Bud lives. This struggle is led by sometimes the ruler himself, or his vizier, or his headman, or his wrestler, or his chief poet and others. Abbas is put into a poison well, Gurbani’s fate is put in a game of gamble, Tahir is put into a chest and thrown into a river and so on. In order to demonstrate the hero’s determination and strength the narrator puts the hero through all imaginable difficulties and makes him come out of those difficulties with a victory. During these trials the hero receives help from a befriended shepherd, a cattle-breeder, a bald man, an impoverished nobleman, a merchant, a gardener’s mother, an old woman, a housemaid, a servant, or the old man he happens to pay a visit and other

ordinary people like these. Finally, they decide to check whether he's the real truthful lover and thus image-win contest of the plot of love story begins.

## **7. Conclusions**

The contests that are described in our love stories with a great love and affection have gone through various stages of development. The reached conclusion is that, although the hero goes through ordeals for his Bud, stands numerous tortures and sometimes is 'killed and brought back to life' by the narrator, he is finally joined with his lover, and they live a happy life. In other words, with the exception of 'Asli and Karam', 'Fatmakhanim', 'Gurbani's' 'live version', 'Good and Evil' and a few other epics, the heroes reach their Bud by winning in contests or competitions, and thus the main plot of the story is completed.

Thus, it celebrates the triumph of love in works created by people who believe in true love, truth and justice, and has done some kind of nurturing in the community by promoting positive images and ideas.

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